

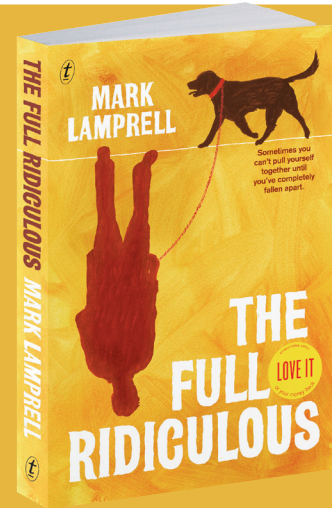
# THE FULL RIDICULOUS

MARK LAMPRELL

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Fiction, Trade Paperback



## Praise for *The Full Ridiculous*

'*The Full Ridiculous* will appeal to readers of quirky, contemporary fiction such as *The Rosie Project* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. It reminds us that sometimes, to really appreciate the beautiful highs of life, you need to hit rock bottom first.'  
*Bookseller & Publisher*

## About Mark Lamprell

Mark Lamprell has worked in film and television for many years. He co-wrote the film *Babe: Pig in the City* and wrote and directed the award-winning feature *My Mother Frank*. His most recent project is the movie musical *Goddess*, which he co-wrote and directed. *The Full Ridiculous* is his first novel.

## A reader's introduction to *The Full Ridiculous*

Michael O'Dell is hit by a car. When he doesn't die, he is surprised and pleased. But he can't seem to move from the crash position. He can't concentrate, or control his anger and grief, or work out what to do about anything much. His wife Wendy is heroically supportive but his teenage children don't help his post-accident angst: daughter Rosie punches out a vindictive schoolmate and all hell breaks loose; son Declan is found with a stash of illicit drugs. A strange policeman starts harrasing the family and ordinary mishaps take on a sinister desperation. To top it all off, Michael's professional life starts to crumble.

A novel deeply concerned with masculinity, *The Full Ridiculous* tracks the emotional life of Michael O'Dell — a middle-aged father of two troubled teenagers and husband of a smart and supportive wife. The novel tells the 'full ridiculous' story of what happens when Michael and his family are hit by a series of crises including Michael's depression. There are no swift resolutions. Yet Michael does eventually come to find hope. Looking to his past helps; so does his family.

Readers are asked to think about the same issues that confront Michael: What makes a good father? What is a man's role if he is not the breadwinner? How can we pull

ourselves out of despair? What can we expect out of life? How do we find contentment?

## Questions for discussion

1. Does this depiction of modern Australian society reflect your own experience? What are the similarities and differences?
2. Discuss the different descriptions of depression in the book. For example: 'a winter that began in summer and lasted one whole year,' or 'despair descends and paralyses you ... like a chemical wash'.
3. Michael is aware that other people are worse off than him. Should we compare our own difficulties to those of others?
4. The narrator tells us that the best entry point into the story is Rosie's altercation with Eve. But the actual book starts with the car accident. And Michael comes to realise that his feelings of abandonment stem from his adoption at birth. Do the different possible beginnings mirror the different possible causes for Michael's depression?
5. How much of Michael's self-loathing stems from his inability to fulfil traditionally masculine roles, especially as breadwinner?
6. Discuss some of the other males in the novel and the alternative models of masculinity they exemplify (for example, George Pessites, Rat-tat-tat, Declan). What about the character Michael often contemplates – Zorba?
7. 'So this perfect little person has arrived and now we get to fuck him up' Wendy says after Declan is born. Is it possible to be a parent without fucking up your children? (You might wish to discuss this question with reference to Philip Larkin's poem 'This Be the Verse'.)
8. 'You are no longer big, strong dependable Daddy. Daddy who puts a roof over our heads and brings home money for food and clothes. Daddy who fixes things and makes things better. Daddy who knows best.' (120) What does the novel say about the importance of traditional models of fatherhood?

9. Discuss the things that bring happiness to Michael.
10. Do you think the contentment Michael experiences at the end of the book will continue?
11. Discuss the character of Wendy. Is she believable? Does she function as a character in her own right, or just as she relates to Michael?
12. How does comedy function in the novel, in contrast to the depression Michael experiences?
13. Why do you think the author has used the second person ('you') narrative voice? Does it make you relate more to the character?
14. And why, then, is there a single chapter written in the first person ('I') narrative voice? Why is it the vignettes about Michael's adoption that are written in this form?